



# POLICE-COMMUNITY PARTNERSHIPS TO ADDRESS DOMESTIC VIOLENCE







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BY:

MELISSA REULAND

MELISSA SCHAEFER MORABITO

CAMILLE PRESTON

JASON CHENEY

This project, conducted by the Police Executive Research Forum (PERF), was supported by Cooperative Agreement # 98-DV-WX-K018 by the U.S. Department of Justice Office of Community Oriented Policing Services (COPS). Points of view or opinions contained in this document are those of the authors and do not necessarily represent the official position or policies of the U.S. Department of Justice or the members of PERF.

Cover Design by Ayonna Johnson, Northrop Grumman Contractor to  
U.S. Department of Justice COPS Office

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# *I. Introduction*



# I. INTRODUCTION

A number of innovative criminal justice system approaches have been developed during the past 15 to 20 years in an attempt to reduce the number of incidences of domestic violence in the United States. Many law enforcement agencies now have policies mandating arrest, or stating a preference for arrest, for domestic violence. Prosecutors are also using a wider array of options to handle domestic violence cases such as no-drop policies, evidence-based prosecution, and special district attorneys assigned to domestic violence cases. As part of the adoption of community policing across the country, local law enforcement agencies are also forming partnerships with community organizations to address domestic violence.

Because there is limited knowledge about how such partnerships coordinate activities to improve response to calls involving domestic violence, PERF was funded by the COPS Office to explore the nature, function, and impact of these police-community partnerships to produce guidance for policy makers on partnerships focused on domestic violence. To learn how the police-community partnerships coordinate their activities and improve their responses to calls involving domestic violence, PERF studied a broad sample of local agencies that have such partnerships. PERF investigators collected data in two phases. In the first phase, project staff reviewed existing literature on the connection between community policing activities and how calls related to domestic violence are handled, interviewed experts on domestic violence and police-community partnerships, and developed data-collection instruments. In the second phase, project staff used a mail survey and telephone interviews and case studies to collect data on actual police-community partnerships.

This report presents a discussion of the literature, describes project methods used and findings of the mail survey, telephone interviews, and case studies of eleven local law enforcement agencies that had formed police-community partnerships to address domestic violence. It highlights successful strategies, lists barriers to effective police-community partnerships, and offers recommendations for overcoming these barriers, as well as providing strategies that can be replicated by other agencies.

## *II. Literature Review*



## II. LITERATURE REVIEW

Data from the last 15 years have shown unprecedented declines in crime. Between 1993 and 2002, the rate of violent crime declined 54 percent (Rennison 2003). During the same period, the National Crime Victim Survey (NCVS) detected similar decreases in nonfatal intimate partner violence (49 percent for women and 42 percent for men) (Rennison 2003). Homicides by intimate partners have not declined as rapidly: the rate of women who were killed by an intimate partner fell only 22 percent during that period. Continued vigilance on the part of criminal justice and advocacy community is needed to maintain—or ideally further—these declines.

Intimate partner violence (IPV) is a multidisciplinary concern because victims often are simultaneously involved with the police, the courts, emergency medical services, shelter providers, and counselors. For instance, victims may petition the courts to grant a restraining order, rely on the police to enforce it, and be dependent on social service providers to help them find a safe place to live. To prevent gaps in acquiring these services, these varying tasks require coordination among agency leaders and front-line personnel. As a result, addressing domestic violence effectively must be a shared priority for criminal justice practitioners, health care professionals, and social service providers.

The research proposed here aims to develop a better understanding of how these various stakeholders combine their energies to improve the response to IPV. This research focuses on IPV, but is guided by the literature reviewed below on family violence, domestic violence, and interpersonal violence, which can include family members who are not intimate partners. For this project, an intimate partner is defined as a former or current spouse, boyfriend, or girlfriend (Rennison and Welchans 2000). Same-sex relationships are also considered as part of this working definition. The following literature addresses law enforcement and prosecution responses to domestic violence and demonstrates that emerging trends in partnerships are promising improvements that require further exploration.

### Changes in Law Enforcement Responses to IPV

Prior to 1970, societal norms dictated that police treat domestic violence as a family matter, not as a problem for the police. While law enforcement agencies were the government body primarily responsible for intervening in family violence (Buzawa and Buzawa 1992), they often had no official recourse when responding to calls for service involving abuse. In fact, police officers were directed not to make an arrest unless there was severe injury to the victim or they personally witnessed the crime (Buzawa and Buzawa 1992). As a result, noninterference was the primary response of law enforcement to these incidents (Giacomazzi and Smithey 2001).

In the early 1980s, the National Institute of Justice funded the Minneapolis Domestic Violence Experiment to explore the relationship between arrest and repeat domestic violence (Sherman and Berk 1984). In the study, police officers used one of three options at random when responding to domestic violence incidents: arrest, mediation, or separation. Investigators measured batterer recidivism by tracking repeat calls for service and conducting interviews with the victims. Study results indicated that arrest was a more effective deterrent of recidivism for batterers than informal response techniques (Sherman and Berk 1984). Several replications studies, however, found mixed results (Pate and Hamilton, 1992; Dunford, Huizinga, and Elliott 1989; Sherman et al. 1992; Loue 2000). Specifically, arrest did not reduce recidivism if the batterers were unemployed and may, in fact, have increased violent incidents (Loue 2000).

Despite the conflicting evidence on the effectiveness of arresting batterers, it quickly became the preferred response of police agencies, at least when the batterer was present. By the mid-1980s, the criminal justice response to domestic violence had changed dramatically, with many agencies shifting away entirely from mediation toward preferred arrest policies (Kane 1999). In some states, mandatory arrest laws require officers to arrest batterers regardless of whether the victim is willing to testify. Advocates lauded the mandatory arrest laws because victims no longer had to press charges against the batterer.

In other areas, police officers are given the authority to make misdemeanor domestic violence arrests even if they have not witnessed the act personally (Kane 1999). Some large and mid-sized police agencies created Domestic Violence or Family Violence Units to address interpersonal violence (Reuland 2001), while other departments instituted new training policies or looked to the advocate community for assistance in developing an effective response.

Evidence suggests that arrest or prosecution programs alone may not prevent recidivist violence (Johnson et al. 1994; Iovanni and Miller 2001). Consequently, many police agencies are looking beyond internal resources to enhance their responses to domestic violence victims. These new approaches often involve partnerships with the community and other criminal justice agencies that focus on reducing the negative consequences of criminal justice system practices by making victim safety a priority.

### Partnership Response to Domestic Violence

During the past few decades, the community policing philosophy has fundamentally changed the nature of American policing. Partnership building and problem solving are among the core components of the community oriented policing philosophy (Cordner 2001). The form and function of partnerships may differ among and within communities, depending on the problems to address and available resources. Practitioners and researchers both have expressed that a collaborative approach could enhance existing services to victims of domestic violence (Belknap and McCall 1994). These predictions have been supported by evaluations of domestic violence partnerships (Zweig 2003; Whetstone 2001; Buzawa and Buzawa 2001).

Researchers and practitioners cite several conditions crucial for partnership success including shared ownership and equal responsibility for decision making; carefully determined organizational structures; education or training about domestic violence; clearly defined roles and responsibilities; and mechanisms for effective information sharing (Giacomazzi and Smithey 2001). Three major partnership models—coalitions, coordinated community responses, and response partnerships—have been identified in the literature. These partnerships vary in scope (including both public and private sector participants) and focus (the batterer, the victim, or the entire family unit) (Giacomazzi and Smithey 2001).

Partnership activities include creating new arrest policies, providing follow-up support for victims, prosecuting offenders, monitoring system activity, developing intervention programs, or strengthening civil remedies, (Shepard et al. 2002) among others. In most communities, partnerships are formed to develop a safety net that ensures victims do not go unnoticed or unassisted (Pollitz Worden 2001) and to improve the function of the criminal justice system. Each form of partnership is described below.

**Coalitions.** Also called task forces or coordinating councils, coalitions are large, multijurisdictional task forces of 30 to 100 people who typically meet monthly to discuss large-scale problems such as policy and legislative changes. Coalition members include representatives from a wide range of systems including criminal justice, health care, education, and social services. Some coalitions focus on coordinating different components of the criminal justice system (Hart 1995), while others address the provision of community-based services. In 1980, for example, activists pioneered the Duluth Domestic Violence Intervention Project to influence interagency reform. The resulting well-known Duluth Model involved practitioners from a wide range of agencies who partnered with the goal of maintaining victim safety (Pence and McMahon 1999).

For some communities, coalitions also serve as a springboard for additional response activities. Coalition meetings provide planning time to discuss or develop coordinated community responses or co-response interventions (Karan et al. 1999). Some coalitions are used as a starting point for conducting safety audits to determine what, if any, gaps exist in the current system (Lee et al. 2000). Regular interaction during meetings can also serve as an impetus to share resources or enter into a more defined collaboration.

The wide range of participants typical of coalitions can allow them to have far-reaching effects. Effective coalitions are able to set the minimum community resource standards necessary to protect victims of domestic violence, to promote understanding of the problem, to assess current practices, and to create mechanisms for information sharing (Witwer and Crawford 1995). Furthermore, coalition activities can provide a forum from which community leaders are able to educate the public about domestic violence.

Conversely, large numbers of participants can be detrimental to effective policy change and can be unwieldy and ineffective. Furthermore, some coalitions use a top-down approach to addressing domestic violence (Smithey and Giacomazzi 1999), with chief executives and agency directors involved in discussions and meetings, while front-line personnel are removed from the process. As a result, effecting policy changes can be difficult because buy-in and input are lacking from the front-line workers who are to implement the responses. Some evidence suggests that communities relying on widespread coalition participation as the primary response to domestic violence create less effective safety nets than jurisdictions that use other methods. When combined with other activities, however, task forces can be an integral part of a domestic violence response that is helpful to victims and their families (Pollitz Worden 2001).

***Coordinated Community Responses.*** The Coordinated Community Response (CCR) models represent collaborative undertakings by two or more agencies to coordinate assistance procedures for domestic violence victims and their families (Stark 2001). CCRs are often grass-roots efforts of one jurisdiction to bring together relevant people to develop and implement policy and training to close gaps in service (Uchida et al. 2001) or to ensure more uniform treatment of victims and offenders in the criminal justice system (Shepard et al. 2002). Participants may also assess problems or manage cases. Participants may include criminal justice practitioners, health care personnel, and social service providers. Based on an area's needs, participants try to maximize available victims' resources and to prevent recidivism.

The Alexandria (Virginia) Police Department initiated a CCR in conjunction with the victim-witness assistance program located in the Commonwealth of Virginia Attorney's office, the courts, and the Virginia Department of Mental Health (Orchowsky 1999). The goal was twofold: to hold offenders accountable and to enhance victim services. To identify victims, the victim-witness assistance program staff review all police incident reports to find any evidence of domestic violence that had been overlooked. A program evaluation revealed that while the police department must improve procedures to link more victims to services, those victims who had been assisted felt better served and protected as a result of the CCR (Orchowsky 1999).

The literature suggests that the more avenues for help that are available, the more likely it is that a victim of domestic violence will seek assistance (Hart 1995). A CCR can offer many doorways to a community's resources. Some evaluations suggest that the CCR model may be the best way to keep victims safe because it can have a significant impact on reducing repeat violence (Crowell and Burgess 1996). Research also suggests that coordinating police action with other criminal justice and social service efforts can have a deterrent effect (Tolman and Weisz 1995).

***Response Partnerships.*** Response partnerships are characterized by two entities (usually law enforcement and service providers) combining efforts to respond to individual cases. Typically, agency personnel co-respond to calls for service, usually once the situation has been secured by police officers. They either ride to the scene with the law enforcement officer or arrive separately. In some jurisdictions, co-response is part of the investigation follow-up. This integrated approach can provide immediate services to victims, when they are most likely to be receptive to and in need of assistance. Co-responses can also enhance investigations, evidence collection, and victim referrals (Brann 1998).

In addition to on-scene responses, some police departments employ domestic violence advocates on staff, provide physical space to house advocates employed by other agencies, or work closely with advocates employed by and located at a local social service agency. For example, in Knoxville, Tennessee, officers are co-located in the police department with advocates from the YMCA to investigate and follow up on all domestic violence calls for service within 48 hours. Advocates are available for walk-in assistance and a community advisory committee was established to centralize procedures (Broyles 2000). A University of Tennessee evaluation revealed that intervention enhanced the safety of victims of domestic violence (Broyles 2000).

The Colorado Springs (Colorado) Police Department developed a well-documented, comprehensive example of a co-response to enhance safety for victims of domestic violence. The COPS-funded Domestic Violence Enhanced Response Team (DVERT) reviews cases referred by any of the partner agencies, not only the police, and selects those where the victim is exposed to imminent danger. DVERT team members from criminal justice, social service, and community-based programs conduct outreach and provide services to the victim (Uchida et al 2001). An evaluation revealed that DVERT staff modified policies and procedures as necessary to ensure that victim needs are being met (Uchida et al. 2001).

## Report Overview

The literature on police-community partnerships suggests the emergence of an important trend in criminal justice system response to intimate partner violence that required further exploration. The current research assessed the nature of police-community partnerships that address domestic violence and documented them to allow other communities to replicate promising approaches. The project used primarily qualitative data collection methods, such as telephone interviews and site visits, to prepare policy recommendations for law enforcement and community organizations on developing effective partnerships.

The project addressed the following research questions:

1. What types of partnerships are formed between law enforcement and community organizations to address domestic violence?
2. How do these partnership arrangements assist law enforcement in addressing domestic violence?
3. What are the goals of various approaches and how well do jurisdictions perceive they are reaching these goals?
4. What are the most important and unique aspects of the partnerships?
5. What barriers and challenges restrict these arrangements and how have they been overcome?
6. What are the worst mistakes that a police department can make?



### *III. Mailed survey*



### III. MAILED SURVEY

This section presents descriptive data collected from departments around the nation that have partnered with the community to address domestic violence. The survey was sent to two groups of departments: 1) those that received funding from the Office of Community Oriented Policing Services (the COPS Office) in 1996 to create partnerships to address domestic violence, and 2) those that were nominated either by the directors of the Regional Community Policing Institutes<sup>1</sup> (RCPI) or state domestic violence coalitions.

The goal of the brief survey was to learn what the agencies were doing and to gather enough information to help determine which departments should be selected for in-depth telephone interviews. From these agencies, eleven sites were selected for on-site case study. This section presents the descriptive information gathered from the survey.

#### Methods

**Survey development.** Ten subject experts from the fields of law enforcement, domestic violence support services, and advocacy were identified, through a snowball process, beginning with those known to the authors of this report and identified through the literature review as knowledgeable and experienced in developing partnerships in this area. Subject experts were interviewed about their experiences with police-community partnerships to identify important variables for inclusion in the forthcoming surveys and site visits. Further, these interviews helped identify terms that would be most inclusive because the researchers wanted to capture the full range of partnership arrangements. The survey used the terms “partner” and “collaborate” and did not provide a definition, and also the term “domestic violence,” which pretesting had determined was the broadest term used by police.

The short survey for law enforcement agencies was designed to collect basic descriptive information on the type of partnership arrangement in which the agency is engaged (task force, coordinated community response, response team<sup>2</sup>); how long it had been active; how often the partners meet; who participates; the target area (multijurisdictional, a single region, part of a region); the partnership activities (provide training, respond to calls, assist in referral services); and successes. The survey is provided in Appendix A.

**Survey Sample and Response.** The Police Executive Research Forum (PERF) surveyed 345 agencies funded by the COPS Office to develop community-policing partnership responses to the problem of domestic violence. Surveys were sent to either the attention of the agency representative who coordinates the domestic violence grant or the chief executive. Three waves of surveys were sent and 272 surveys were returned for a 79 percent response rate.

1. In 1997, COPS funded the creation of the only national training network of Regional Community Policing Institutes (RCPI) to provide comprehensive and innovative community policing education, training, and technical assistance to COPS grantees throughout the nation. To learn more about the RCPIs, visit COPS Online at [www.cops.usdoj.gov](http://www.cops.usdoj.gov).

2. Task forces are characterized by periodic meetings to set policies, procedures, and develop training. Coordinated community responses typically involve coordinating existing resources, case management, problem solving, information exchange, and resource sharing. Response teams partner police with a service provider to provide walk-in support, referrals, information, and counseling to victims and batterers.

PERF also surveyed 63 departments nominated either by the RCPIs or state domestic violence coalition directors as having promising domestic violence partnerships. Two waves of surveys were sent resulting in 57 surveys returned for a 90 percent response. The combined response for the two sets of surveys (329 and 408) was approximately 81 percent.

Figures 1 and 2 show that the responding departments represent small, medium, and large departments from across the nation.

**Figure 1. Population of Responding Departments (n=329)**

Population	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Fewer than 25,000	87	26.4	27.0	27.0
Between 25,000 and 49,999	47	14.3	14.6	41.6
Between 50,000 and 74,999	38	11.6	11.8	53.4
Between 75,000 and 99,999	22	6.7	6.8	60.2
Between 100,000 and 149,999	29	8.8	9.0	69.3
Between 150,000 and 249,999	33	10.0	10.2	79.5
More than 250,000	66	20.1	20.5	100.0
Total Valid	322	97.9	100.0	
Missing	7	2.1		
Total	329	100.0		

**Figure 2. Region of the Nation of Responding Departments**

Region	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Northwest	24	7.3	7.4	7.4
Southwest	45	13.7	13.8	21.2
North Central	72	21.9	22.1	43.3
South Central	35	10.6	10.7	54.0
Northeast	88	26.7	27.0	81.0
Southeast	62	18.8	19.0	100.0
Total Valid	326	99.1	100.0	
Missing	3	.9		
Total	329	100.0		

## Survey Findings

Data analyses were directed at answering the following research questions:

1. *What terms do departments use to describe their partnerships?* Figure 3 demonstrates that the majority of respondents (41.9 percent) describe their partnerships as Coordinated Community Responses (CCR) alone or in combination with other types (14.9 percent). Some respondents (16.9 percent) selected more than one term, most often choosing task force in combinations with CCR.

**Figure 3. Partnership Type For All Respondents**

Type	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Task force only	53	13.0	17.6	17.6
CCR only	126	30.9	41.9	59.5
Response Team only	40	9.8	13.3	72.8
TF and CCR	20	4.9	6.6	79.4
TF and RT	6	1.5	2.0	81.4
CCR and RT	10	2.5	3.3	84.7
TF and CCR and RT	15	3.7	5.0	89.7
Other committee or team	26	6.4	8.6	98.3
Other shared staff	5	1.2	1.7	100.0
Total	301	73.8	100.0	
Missing	107	26.2		
	408	100.0		

2. *In what activities do partnerships engage?* Figure 4 shows the frequency of various partnership activities as reported by the respondents in an open-ended format. The activities were coded and combined into the listed categories. The complete set of codes and typical responses included in each are provided at the end of Appendix A. The most frequently listed activities (41.3 percent) were coded as victim assistance or outreach, which included coordinating victims' services and providing additional service such as counseling. Many respondents (37.1 percent) also cited their participation in coalitions, task forces, teams, or planning committees.

**Figure 4. Partnership Activities for all Respondents  
(These categories are not mutually exclusive)**

	Frequency	Percent*
Training/outreach	72	21.9
Victim assistance or service	136	41.3
Coalitions or teams	122	37.1
On-scene responses	40	12.2
Special DV unit/review	65	19.8
Policies/procedures general	43	13.1
Offender services	10	3.0
* percent of total respondents (329)		

3. *What activities are listed for each partnership type?* An analysis of listed activities for each partnership type reveals that the terms selected generally are consistent with activities mentioned. For example, approximately 62 percent of the task force partnerships mentioned participation in coalitions or teams and almost 60 percent of the CCR partnerships listed victim services. This consistency was not clear, however, for the response team partnerships. For these departments, on-scene responses were mentioned by only 42 percent of the cases. This group mentioned on-scene responses more frequently from the other groups. The activity measure was coded from open-ended responses, so it is not wholly reflective of all activities of the partnership (Figures 5, 6, and 7).

**Figure 5. Activities Listed for Task Force Respondents  
(These categories are not mutually exclusive)**

	Frequency	Percent*
Training/outreach	25	26.6
Victim assistance or service	35	37.2
Coalitions or teams	58	61.7
On-scene responses	9	9.6
Special DV unit/review	11	11.7
Policies/procedures general	11	11.7
Offender services	6	6.4
* percent of 94 task forces responding to the question		

**Figure 6. Activities Listed for Coordinated Community Response Respondents  
(These categories are not mutually exclusive)**

	Frequency	Percent*
Training/outreach	46	29.9
Victim assistance or service	92	59.7
Coalitions or teams	80	51.9
On-scene responses	14	9.1
Special DV unit/review	40	30.0
Policies/procedures general	24	15.6
Offender services	6	3.9
* percent of 154 CCRs replying to the question		

**Figure 7. Activities Listed for Response Team Respondents  
(These categories are not mutually exclusive)**

	Frequency	Percent*
Training/outreach	8	12.7
Victim assistance or service	39	61.9
Coalitions or teams	28	44.4
On-scene responses	27	42.9
Special DV unit/review	15	23.8
Policies/procedures general	8	12.7
Offender services	2	3.2
* percent of 94 task forces responding to the question		

4. *How long, on average, do these partnerships last?* For the full sample, the partnerships length ranged from 4 to 258 months, with a mean of 57.63 and a standard deviation of 40.88. Figure 8 expresses the mean number of months for each type of partnership and shows no differences.

**Figure 8. Mean Number of Months for Partnership Types**

	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
<b>Northwest</b>	24	7.3	7.4	7.4
<b>Southwest</b>	45	13.7	13.8	21.2
<b>North Central</b>	72	21.9	22.1	43.3
<b>South Central</b>	35	10.6	10.7	54.0
<b>Northeast</b>	88	26.7	27.0	81.0
<b>Southeast</b>	62	18.8	19.0	100.0
<b>Total Valid</b>	326	99.1	100.0	
<b>Missing</b>	3	.9		
<b>Total</b>	329	100.0		

5. *How many partnerships have continued beyond COPS funding?* The majority of agencies (65 percent) have continued their partnership arrangements beyond the external funding provided by COPS (Figure 9). This finding is of particular interest as federal agencies grapple with making the most out of limited program resources. It appears that once COPS funds were used to encourage partnerships (and for 134 agencies with partnerships in existence today, the partnerships began with COPS funding), the positive outcomes of these arrangements were sufficient to impel agencies to maintain them using internal resources (Figure 10).

**Figure 9. Is the Partnership Still in Existence?**

	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
<b>No</b>	99	24.3	30.3	30.3
<b>Yes</b>	214	52.5	65.4	95.7
<b>Not known</b>	14	3.4	4.3	100.0
<b>Total</b>	327	80.1	100.0	
<b>Missing</b>	81	19.9		
	408	100.0		

**Figure 10. For Those Still in Existence Today:  
Was the Partnership in Existence Prior to 1996?**

	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
<b>No</b>	134	62.6	62.6	62.6
<b>Yes</b>	59	27.6	27.6	90.2
<b>Not known</b>	21	9.8	9.8	100.0
<b>Total</b>	214	100.0	100.0	

6. *Who from the criminal justice system participates in the partnership (Figure 11)?*

**Figure 11. Criminal Justice System Participants  
(These categories are not mutually exclusive)**

	Frequency	Percent*
<b>Police</b>	314	96.0
<b>District Attorney's Office</b>	233	71.3
<b>Judge</b>	123	37.6
<b>Probation or parole</b>	148	45.3
<b>Other</b>	67	20.5

\* Percentage of valid responses (327)

7. *Who from the community participates in the partnership (Figure 12)?*

**Figure 12. Community Participants  
(These categories are not mutually exclusive)**

	Frequency	Percent*
<b>Advocacy Groups</b>	267	81.7
<b>Victim's Shelter</b>	285	87.2
<b>Medical Professionals</b>	134	41.0
<b>Counseling Services</b>	233	71.3
<b>Treatment Services</b>	196	59.9
<b>Other</b>	67	20.5

\* Percentage of valid responses (327)

## *IV. Telephone Interviews*



## IV. TELEPHONE INTERVIEWS

The investigators had planned to use data from the mailed survey to select sites for the case study. Several of the survey items lent themselves to site selection criteria. For example, case study sites would still have to be in existence. Surprisingly, though, this information limited the sample slightly—to only 214 agencies. To select sites from these 214, the investigators determined that 59 partnerships had preceded the COPS funding and assessed the number and type of activities, looking for jurisdictions that go beyond providing training and holding meetings, for example. Ultimately, the summary nature of the survey data enabled the investigators to determine that in-depth telephone interviews were needed to further reduce the sample and select sites that were engaged in comprehensive partnerships.

### Methods

Agencies that engaged in more than one activity (Question 2, above), for example both training and on-scene response, were identified for the telephone interviews. This strategy yielded 48 agencies (see list in Appendix B). Respondents who had completed the mailed survey were recruited to participate in an hour-long telephone interview (see Appendix B) to gather additional information about their partnerships. Forty-one agencies agreed to participate.

### Interview Findings

Using the information gathered in the telephone interviews, project staff prepared one-to-three-page summary descriptions for each partnership. The project team rated these partnerships on a scale of 1 to 5 (where 1 was poor and 5 was excellent) on the following dimensions: strength of the partnership, availability and variety of response, resources allocated, improvements since inception, and extent of self-measured success. These dimensions are defined as follows:

- *Partnership strength*: Includes the number and variety of partnering agencies and the police department's frequency of interaction with program partners.
- *Availability and variety of response*: Is response available 24 hours a day, 7 days a week for all domestic violence calls and do the advocates provide or at least refer victims to all needed assistance?
- *Resource allocation*: Does the department have a domestic violence unit or do all officers have contact with advocates; are the appropriate number of people and resources allocated to response to calls for service?
- *Improvement since program inception*: Has the police department identified areas needing improvement and made necessary changes for improvement?
- *Extent of self-measured success*: What are the methods of measuring success and the extent to which successes match program goals?

The ratings for each question were combined for each site and the sites were ranked overall. The project team discussed sites within the top rankings, and selected those representing a range of city sizes and regions of the country. The agencies interviewed by telephone have very strong partnerships, many of which have already been studied in the literature (see literature review). To reduce the number of sites for case study, the project team considered how comprehensive the partnerships were, whether they were victim centered, their use of advocates (either as department personnel or not), whether they had been studied previously (if so, they were not included), the use of volunteers (who ride in patrol cars with police) and colocation of partners. Although the investigators had planned to conduct only eight site visits, three additional sites that were in close proximity to the eight core sites were also visited. These three sites were referred to as satellite sites and fewer people were interviewed.

## TELEPHONE INTERVIEWS

The following eleven sites were selected for case study (\* indicates a satellite site):

1. Arlington (Texas) Police Department
2. Broward County (Florida) Sheriff's Office
3. Fort Worth (Texas) Police Department\*
4. Fort Smith (Arkansas) Police Department
5. Huntsville (Alabama) Police Department
6. Indianapolis (Indiana) Police Department
7. Manchester (Connecticut) Police Department
8. Nassau County (New York) Police Department\*
9. Santa Barbara (California) Police Department\*
10. Westminster (California) Police Department
11. Xenia (Ohio) Police Division



# *V. Case Studies*



## V. CASE STUDIES

### Methods

Teams of two project staff visited each site for two days to collect data from the participants of the police-community partnerships. Data were collected during individual interviews (an example interview is in Appendix C) and focus groups composed of relevant law enforcement and partner personnel, as well as from police records and reports. If possible, project staff also observed the work of the partnerships. For example, if the partnership involved a coordinated response to calls for service, the staff did ride alongs on the calls.

The goal of these site visits was to document in detail a wide range of promising types of partnerships, better understand the factors that promote success, and assess the relative effects of these different arrangements on the domestic violence problems identified by each site. The site visit data were analyzed primarily by qualitative methods because the sample size was too small to merit quantitative approaches. The findings, described below, illuminate important elements of the partnership arrangements and interrelationships between the study variables.

### Partnership Descriptions: Eight Core Sites

#### *Arlington, Texas*

This partnership is a coordinated on-scene collaboration between the Arlington Police Department and The Women's Shelter that aims to reduce domestic violence incidents, educate domestic violence victims, serve children who witness domestic violence, and to break the cycle of domestic violence and repeat victimization. The police department uses Victim Assistance staff paired with highly trained and specialized response team volunteers who are on duty during evenings and late nights and are dispatched at the request of patrol officers. The response team provides crisis intervention, informs victims of services available to them, and assists victims in requesting emergency protective orders. The response team also assists victims in making safety plans, helping with witness statements, and arranging or providing transportation of victims and pets to shelters. Line-level officers appreciate the work of the response team because domestic violence calls can be challenging and the team frees them to complete other tasks at the scene. By calling on the response team, police can concentrate on investigating the allegation of violence and on dealing with the offender. The response team is on duty 7 days a week from 4 p.m. to 2 a.m. Victim Assistance Program supervisors and other program staff are available during the day and are on call after hours. The partnership helps assure that everyone involved in a domestic violence case, from 911 or shelter hot line calls, works together throughout the process to provide the best possible service to the victim, using the strengths of each partner's role.

#### *Broward County, Florida*

The Broward County Sheriff's Office has partnered with Women in Distress (a battered-women's shelter) and Victim Assistance to bring a coordinated response to domestic violence incidents. The partnership seeks to better serve victims through a multidisciplinary method to increase safety of victims and to provide counseling services and transportation.

The sheriff's office formed a Special Victims Unit specifically to target domestic violence. This unit consists of six in-house advocates who respond on-scene with deputies, and can also provide court advocacy for victims, review cases, and provide follow up for victims. In addition, there is a notification specialist who tells victims the location of their assailant (that is, whether in prison or where they are currently residing), an investigative assistant who handles

clerical duties, and one supervisor. All deputies in the sheriff's office receive training on domestic violence at the academy as well as 8 hours each year of in-service training. Deputies also have access to special evidence-collection kits (including a camera and other evidence-collection instruments) that help the state attorney's office build solid cases. Women in Distress receives copies of all domestic violence reports so that staff can follow up with victims and inform them of the services available to them.

### ***Fort Smith, Arkansas***

The Fort Smith Police Department partners with a local agency called the Crisis Center for Women in a coordinated response effort to reduce domestic violence incidents. The two main purposes of the organization are to assist women and families who experience abuse and to advocate for, and provide services to, rape victims. Goals include improving the quality of services to victims, appropriately evaluating successes and making necessary changes to the program when necessary, increasing officer awareness, and going beyond just arresting the batterer to having a victim-oriented response. The partnership resulted from a COPS grant, and although the grant has expired, the program is still in place. The Center provides training to department personnel, victim information referral sheets, a 24-hour response van that arrives at the scene of disputes to provide shelter, assistance in filing emergency protective orders, and court advocacy and transportation. In addition, the Crisis Center partnered with the police department in developing a Sexual Assault Nurse Examiner (SANE) program.

When an officer responds to a domestic violence call, he/she may contact the dispatcher, who will call the Crisis Center for Women 24-hour hot line. Then the Crisis Center sends a response van to the scene and will transport the victim and children to the Center's shelter. The Center will also provide transportation to court appearances and provide court advocacy. This on-scene response is available for all situations, 24 hours a day, 7 days a week. After the on-scene response is complete, the case is turned over to the domestic violence unit, which consists of two full-time investigators who handle all incoming cases.

### ***Huntsville, Alabama***

The First Responder program is a partnership between Crisis Services of North Alabama (Crisis Services) and the Huntsville Police Department to provide on-scene response to victims of domestic violence. Crisis Services serves five counties and has three shelters. Counseling at Crisis Services includes a Trauma Counseling Program for children who witness violence and for victims of violence. The organization also has a legal advocacy program to provide legal services and representation to women who need emergency protection orders, divorce and child custody assistance, and who are not eligible to receive representation through the state's legal service provider. The goals of the partnership are to decrease or eliminate domestic violence-related homicides, decrease the number of repeat calls and recidivism, assist and educate victims, hold offenders accountable, inform victims about access to services, and to let children who witness domestic violence know that it is not their fault.

The program coordinator, an advocate from Crisis Services, works at the police department and reviews every report filed at the department (not just domestic violence reports) to identify situations that involve an incident of domestic violence. The program coordinator works with the domestic violence investigators to assess the needs of domestic violence victims and help them access needed services.

The second key feature of the partnership is that volunteer advocates ride along with patrol officers to respond on scene to incidents involving domestic violence. Once the officer clears the advocate to go onto the property, the advocate will work with the victim, provide crisis counseling, and offer information packets that let victims know what options they have and how they can make safety plans. The advocates also arrange shelter admittance and transportation, and children of victims also receive information packets.

***Indianapolis, Indiana***

The Indianapolis Police Department has partnered with The Julian Center (a women's shelter) to address domestic violence in a collaborative, coordinated response. Goals of the program include increasing the awareness of, and education about, domestic violence, involving the entire system, filling gaps in services, and generally creating a seamless system.

The Julian Center's new director invited and paid for the police department to house its Domestic Violence Unit at the center. The Domestic Violence Unit only handles misdemeanor cases—the homicide unit handles all other types of crime, such as serious felonies. Also, in each of the police department's district headquarters, a district advocate from the Family Advocacy Center (FAC, an organization that also has advocates who work in the courts and with Child Protective Services) works at the department and responds to on-scene requests and provides court accompaniment to victims. Patrol officers radio for the FAC advocate to come to the scene, but each district advocate is only available to respond on scene during the times in which each district has determined (through a Weed and Seed grant) when the most domestic violence incidents occur.

***Manchester, Connecticut***

The partnership is a collaboration between the Manchester Police Department and Interval House, a women's shelter and advocacy group. The coordinated response of the special unit consists of staff from both agencies and is called the Domestic Violence Outreach Team (DVOT) which provides follow up to domestic violence victims, links them with resources, and informs them of available services. Goals of the program are to provide an enhanced response to domestic violence victims (including emergency protective orders), court advocacy (providing information on both the criminal and civil courts—such as custody dispute procedure and protective orders), increase the quality of criminal investigations, and provide outreach to victims and the community.

The DVOT program links victims with shelter services, other victims' services, mental health services, medical professionals, and the Department of Children and Families. The on-scene response is not only prompted by calls for service, but a large number of cases involve women who are referred by the Department of Children and Families or women who are afraid to call the police. The DVOT team will go on scene to talk with the victim at his or her own discretion. Sometimes they travel with patrol, but mostly go on their own time. The on-scene response and follow-up is provided only at the times of day that both team members (the officer and the advocate) are available. They do not like to respond right after an incident, however, because the offender usually is present and the advocate does not want the offender to know that the victim is speaking with the DVOT. If a woman is unable to leave her home to discuss the case with the team, they will go to her home.

***Westminster, California***

The police department unit's goal is to decrease the number of domestic violence incidents, to attend to victims' needs, and to reduce negative impact of domestic violence on children. The department is involved in several partnerships with multiple community domestic service providers, mainly the Women's Transitional Living Center and Interval House. They also collaborate with the district attorney's office and probation and parole. The department has a Family Violence Unit (FVU) which consists of two bilingual detectives; one handles domestic violence cases and the other handles sexual assault cases. The team also has an in-house deputy district attorney who works on all domestic violence cases from the beginning all the way to sentencing. A victims' advocate from the Women's Transitional Living Center also works at the FVU. In addition, the unit has a nonsworn police service officer to handle clerical duties related to the unit.

Responding officers can call the victim advocate (who works in the department 4 days a week but is on call 24 hours a day, 7 days a week) to go to the scene of the domestic violence incident, or can refer the victim to services and a 24-hour hot line. If the victim needs immediate shelter, officers will transport her and her children to the Women's Transitional Living Center. There, the victims receive shelter, legal aid, counseling, and medical assistance or referral. Because most cases happen at night, officers will visit the advocate the next morning to let her/him know what the situation is so he or she can talk to the victim and convince the victim to get help. The advocate conducts trainings during briefings and gives officers pamphlets that contain information on available resources.

### ***Xenia, Ohio***

In 1996, the Xenia Police Department partnered with the Family Violence Prevention Center (FVPC) to address domestic violence in a cooperative approach, namely the Divert Team. The Divert Team's goals are to decrease the number of domestic violence incidents, connect victims with resources, help the police department to conform to new state laws about reporting, and educate police officers about domestic violence.

The Divert Team program provides on-scene secondary response and follow-up services to calls related to domestic violence. The team consists of two officers and two advocates from the FVPCP: one responds to Xenia calls, the other to calls in the nearby town of Bellbrook. The team is available 15 hours a day to provide on-scene secondary response. To better establish a coordinated response, a police investigator and a sergeant are stationed in the same building with the FVPC to help facilitate interagency cooperation and information sharing. In addition, the shelter is in a disclosed (that is, non-secretive) location, and staff believe that because of these two factors, no batterers have tried to enter the facility to locate their spouses or partners.

On-scene response is the primary activity of the Divert Team. Team members are notified when an officer responding to a call for service believes that a domestic incident has occurred. They concentrate their team response on misdemeanor incidents rather than on more serious incidents as part of a prevention approach. Any combination of a full-time detective, sergeant, and FVPC advocate may respond to the scene. At the scene, the Divert Team member assesses the immediate needs of the victim (including medical) and the potential lethality of the situation, determines the level of crime (felony, misdemeanor), and provides transportation to the FVPC shelter. Although the team is available to respond on scene only from 8 AM to 11 PM, Monday through Friday, the team can be paged and usually will go to the victim's house on the next business day after the original call for service.

## **Partnership Descriptions: Three Satellite Sites**

### ***Fort Worth, Texas***

The Domestic Assault Response Team (DART) program is the secondary response team that pairs two DART detectives from the Family Violence Unit (headed by a sergeant) with volunteer advocates from the Women's Haven (a local shelter). The goals of the program are to provide victims with information about counseling and options (for example, protective orders), and early on-scene intervention services.

The DART detectives work four 10-hour days (Wednesday through Saturday, 6 p.m. to 4 a.m.) and Sunday, 1 p.m. to 11 p.m. The domestic violence volunteers work 8 hours of the detectives' shifts. The advocates provide crisis intervention, give information and referrals to victims, and facilitate admission of victims to the emergency shelter when necessary. In addition to providing secondary on-scene response, the detectives also go to the scene when a detective needs additional information or when following up to a repeat call for service. The detectives relieve and assist patrol staff by taking over on-scene stabilization and investigation.

***Nassau County, New York***

The Nassau County Police Department partnered with the Nassau County Coalition on Domestic Violence to offer victims the highest levels of safety and protection. The deputy commanding officer in each of the eight precincts of the police department is responsible for faxing a computerized printout of arrest reports for all domestic violence cases to the coalition staff members on a weekly basis, and more often if necessary. The Coalition staff members provide follow up for victims, including counseling, personal alarms, medical care, shelter, mental health services, court advocacy, and additional referrals. The Coalition's 24-hour hotline enables victims to access on-call advocates. A police department liaison oversees the partnership. The police department also partners with the district attorney's office, other victims' services, batterers' treatment services, mental health services, and medical professionals through a domestic violence task force.

***Santa Barbara, California***

The Santa Barbara Police Department partnered with Domestic Violence Solutions, a local non-profit organization, to form a collaborative coordinated effort to reduce domestic violence. The partnership helps victims of domestic violence through early intervention via emergency response, support through case management, counseling, on-scene assistance, and zero tolerance of domestic violence. The Domestic Violence Emergency Response Team (DVERT) advocates respond with the police to domestic violence scenes (in Santa Barbara, the advocates must be called out on domestic violence calls) to provide counseling and follow-up services for victims (specifically, they refer or transport victims to shelter, assist with food, employment, and other follow up, and also help victims with emergency protective orders (this is a mandatory on-scene offer). Rape crisis advocates can respond on scene if called (in fact, if the victim was sexually assaulted, the department's policy is that officers cannot question the victim until the rape crisis advocate has spoken with her). Oversight of the DVERT team is conducted by a board consisting of all partners: shelter services, other victims' services, mental health services, courts, district attorney's office, and the police. The department has a mandatory arrest policy if anyone is injured on scene. The DVERT program began when the district attorney's office, rape crisis services, and shelter formed a collaborative response, after which the police received a COPS grant and joined the partnership.

**Case Study Findings:****Keys to Effective Police Response to Domestic Violence**

Site visitors asked respondents to articulate the key elements of an effective police response to domestic violence and what helps police provide the best response. In ten out of the eleven sites visited, training and education were cited as the best ways to achieve these key elements. Ongoing training helps officers understand victims' behavior and problems from the victim's point of view, which can help officers deal with frustration they may feel as they deal with repeat or reluctant victims. The key elements are discussed below, separately for police sources and community partner sources.

**Police Sources:** Most frequently, police respondents said that the key to effective response to domestic violence is to treat it like any other crime, that is seriously, and to conduct a solid investigation (involving good evidence collection), and make arrests. In the words of the respondents:

- Arlington, Texas, victim assistance coordinator who works in the police department: "With domestic violence policing trends moving toward evidence-based investigation, officers conduct investigations as they would any other kind of crime considering the entire scene and all the evidence, rather than relying on the victim's statement alone." She stressed the importance of taking photographs, noting the condition of the room, the victim and suspect's demeanor, and seizing weapons [and other materials] as evidence.

- Broward County, Florida, lieutenant: “Officers need to recognize these issues as criminal behavior, not just ‘a family thing’ or ‘it’s between him and her’. Our deputies have been given special kits, consisting of a camera, film, batteries, cassette recorders, and tapes, which are to be used to collect evidence and make a strong case against the batterer.”
- Indianapolis, Indiana, captain: “Officers need to take domestic violence seriously: they need to give domestic violence as much a priority as any other battery case, and they must be willing to spend time on the scene, sorting out the primary aggressor, sorting out the seriousness of the case, offering shelter and transportation, and seeking out witnesses for a stronger case.”
- Manchester, Connecticut, detective: “Effective police responses to domestic violence comes from the availability of two officers on the scene with good investigative techniques, such as interviewing victims out of earshot or line of sight from the offender to reduce intimidation and obtaining the victim’s history.”
- Nassau County, New York, chief: “The key element for an effective response is acceptance that domestic violence is a crime, and that an offense committed in a domestic setting is perceived like any other offense. It needs to be taken seriously as a police matter.”
- Xenia, Ohio, sergeant: “Information gathering is important; from the time the call comes into the communications system to when the officer investigates. It’s a matter of collecting as much information as possible to build the case and to gather enough evidence for a successful prosecution.”

In addition, the police department must be willing to partner with the community to address the problem together. These partnerships include early intervention efforts with schools, shelter providers, and counseling agencies. Respondents recognize that partnerships with community agencies and volunteers are needed because the law enforcement agency cannot address this problem alone. Some agencies stressed the partnerships they have with the district attorney’s office as well as with the court. In the words of the respondents:

- Arlington, Texas, chief: “Partnerships are important because police are not domestic violence experts. Police have to intervene in crises and provide services and education to victims. Organizations such as the women’s shelter have professionals who work with these issues on a daily basis. The police will have a larger impact by working in partnership. If we’re doing this for victims, then we want to create the greatest impact possible, and we can do that with our partnerships. We can’t do it alone.”
- Fort Smith, Arkansas, chief: “Partnering with the Crisis Center for Women has been a critical component to our effective police response because the Center provides victims with alternatives to leave their current arrangements.”
- Fort Smith, Arkansas, major: “The partnership with the Crisis Center for Women helps to support, educate and empathize with officers.”
- Santa Barbara, California, captain: “The key element is having a multi-agency collaboration from start to finish. There can’t be any gaps for service or contact—there has to be constant contact. If there is any drop time in which the victim doesn’t know who to call, it’s detrimental to an effective collaborative response.”

Another key to success described by the police respondents was a focus on, and awareness of, victims and the situations they are in. These respondents noted that officers must be sensitive to this situation and show empathy and compassion for victims. This focus on victims also includes a focus on their safety. In the words of the respondents:

- Arlington, Texas, police officer: “Officers need to have sensitivity in domestic violence situations, given that officers may be taking someone’s loved one to jail. To me, that’s where partnership with VA (the Victim Assistance Domestic Violence Response Team) is beneficial, because I may have to put someone in jail, and then it’s hard for me to turn around after I’ve sent that person to jail and try to do counseling with the victim. If I can bring someone else in to play that role, I’ll stay there if I need to, but if VA can come in and do the counseling role—that takes away from me having to be two-faced, put them in jail and then ‘I’m sorry’. I don’t have to go from enforcer to counselor.”
- Broward County, Florida, detective sergeant: “Everything starts with the first responder because they are the initial field contact with victims. It is important for victims to get the appropriate attention. It is very important to show concern for the victim and show them that deputies do care.”
- Huntsville, Alabama, chief: “We emphasize a focus on the victim. We cannot lose this focus, as it is what drives the community’s activities.”
- Huntsville, Alabama, detective: “It is very important to get victims to a safe place. Victim safety can be improved when police and advocates work together. Sometimes, because of trust issues, victims who won’t cooperate with the police will cooperate with the advocates.”

Respondents also were concerned that officers have sufficient knowledge about what causes domestic violence, how relationship violence can be cyclical, and why some partners will not leave abusive relationships readily. This knowledge can underscore both the necessity of arrest and the complexities of why arrest may not always be the most effective response. In the words of the respondents:

- Broward County, Florida, lieutenant: “Officers also need to recognize that someone may be completely unable to remove themselves from the situation due to fear, threats, or a lack of resources.”
- Fort Smith, Arkansas, major: “Officers must understand the potential ramifications of not arresting. For example, officers must realize the significance of domestic violence and its impact on children.”
- Manchester, Connecticut, supervisor: “Officers must be aware they are not dealing with a single issue. It is not just a crime or just an arrest. There are a lot of underlying reasons and issues that come into play: relationship issues, involvement of children. The officers have to have a level of compassion and understanding to recognize the needs of the victim, the abuser, and the children involved.”

Another critical component to an effective police response is that it includes an opportunity to communicate a range of options to the victim. This is important so the victim knows that something is being done, and that he or she has choices. In the words of the respondents:

- Broward County, Florida, deputy: “If we give the victim the feeling that something is being done, it will in turn give alternatives to the victim.”
- Indianapolis, Indiana, captain: “Officers must also be conscious of children who are on the scene and knowledgeable of the services available for victims.”